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Testimony Regarding

Raised Bill 5544

An Act Concerning the Consolidation of Public Safety Answering Points

made before the

Public Safety and Security Committee

March 8, 2016

Senator Larson, Representative Dargan, members of the Education Committee - my name is John Filchak, Executive Director of the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments. I also come before you today as a member of the Commission on Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE).

Raised Bill 5544 seeks to incentivize the regionalization of Public Service Answering Points or PSAPs. **We believe that this legislation is a sound measure and urge your support.** In northeastern Connecticut we have been served for many years by a regional PSAP (Quinebaug Valley Emergency Communications, Inc.) covering a 17 town area - which includes 34 fire departments, 14 ambulance agencies, two municipal police departments and multiple paramedic intercept providers. Our regional PSAP works effectively in terms of the duties it performs in dispatching emergency services and saves our towns money through the efficient delivery of its services. The current fragmented system (see attached map) is not optimal in terms of processing routine calls, responding to major events (hurricanes, snow storms, flooding) or maximizing the cost savings and efficiencies related to the procurement and maintenance of equipment.

PSAPs are an essential element of our state's and our national security infrastructure.

Today, 9-1-1 is the most important and recognized telephone number in America and a key component of the nation's critical infrastructure; in the same way as electric, natural gas, and water supply systems. Consumers look at 9-1-1 as that gateway through which to report emergencies. In the almost 48 years since the first 9-1-1 call was made in Haleyville, AL on February 16, 1968, 9-1-1 has been instrumental in saving millions of lives and trillions of dollars in property. Each day approximately 655,000 9-1-1 calls are made resulting in 240 million 9-1-1 calls annually. These calls are answered in approximately 6,000 9-1-1 centers, a.k.a. Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs).¹

¹ Federal Communications Commission, Task Force on Optimal PSAP Architecture (TFOPA) An FCC Federal Advisory Committee, Friday, January 29, 2016, page 9.

Connecticut, with a population of 3.5 million persons and a land area of 5,543 square miles, has 104 PSAPs. By comparison, Texas, with a population of nearly 27 million and a land area of 269,000 square miles, has 72 PSAPs. The Washington State with a population 7 million persons and a land area of 7 million a land area of 66,544 square miles, has 63 PSAPs. Pennsylvania, with a population of nearly 13 million people and a land area of 46,000 square miles, has 69 PSAPs.

In February of 2013 the New England Public Policy Center at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston published a study *“The Quest for Cost-Efficient Local Government in New England: What Role for Regional Consolidation?”* which, in part, examined Connecticut’s 911 system. *“Even after accounting for the relatively large number of cities, towns, and other local governments, ... Connecticut have exceptionally large numbers of PSAPs, compared with other states. “* This study performed a hypothetical analysis of Connecticut if it had just eight PSAPs (using the eight counties) and the result showed a savings of approximately 60 percent compared to the non-consolidated structure. The study made clear that the estimates in terms of savings are long-term and do not factor in transition costs. However, the study does strongly suggest that PSAP consolidation has the potential for significant savings.

Reforming our current fragmented system will also be important as we transition into Next Generation 911 (NG911) which will enhance our current 911 system “to create a faster, more flexible, resilient, and scalable system that allows 911 to keep up with communication technology used by the public.²”

Raised Bill 5544, if enacted, would mark a significant move forward in the regionalization of our PSAPs. This change is long overdue and the benefits will be long-lasting.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

² 911.gov

A horizontal scale bar with tick marks at 0, 5, 10, and 20. The word "Miles" is written below the 20 mark.

